

Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services Guide

On Serving Individuals Who Are
Deaf, Deaf at Risk, DeafBlind,
Hard of Hearing, Late Deafened,
or Oral Deaf

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** sections currently being developed*

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Introduction (Section Being Developed)

Legislative Mandates (Section Being Developed)

Population (Section Being Developed)

Definitions & Limitations / General Barriers (Section Being Developed)

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Branch

Historically, OVR has long recognized the unique challenges that deafness or hearing loss places on the individual. First, there is a pervasive communication barrier that separates individuals from having access to needed services. Secondly, a lack of understanding of unique problems experienced by the individuals who are deaf, deaf at risk, deafblind, hard of hearing, late deafened or oral deaf may negate successful rehabilitation outcomes. In recognizing these obstacles, OVR established the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Branch (DHHS) within the Division of Program Services. The Branch designation acknowledges the specialized skill set that is required of OVR staff to effectively serve these consumers and ensures that the integrity of these services will be maintained.

The key to successful rehabilitation is effective communication and full participation of individuals who are deaf, deaf at risk, deafblind, hard of hearing or late deafened or oral deaf. Care should be taken in each step of the rehabilitation process so that communication is clear and these individuals are involved and understand both his/her and the agency's responsibilities.

Before 1996, Kentucky OVR basically used a "one size fits all" approach to services to persons with hearing loss, meaning that one counselor was assigned to serve the full spectrum of these individuals. At the request of consumers, these services were redesigned to focus on the communication needs first. Now, consumers are assigned a counselor based on their stated communication preference or mode, at the time of the referral. Only designated trained counselors serve these individuals.

OVR DHHS Program Administrator

The DHHS Branch Program Administrator has the responsibility of oversight for personnel who provide agency services to persons with hearing loss. The DHHS Program Administrator develops programming and provides training or technical assistance for OVR and other service providers to ensure effective delivery of VR services to this population. The DHHS Program Administrator works directly with the Division Director of Program Services to resolve issues or questions concerning branch services.

The DHHS Program Administrator duties include oversight and direct supervision of other DHHS Branch administrators who are charged with provisions of OVR programs/services to individuals with hearing loss including persons who are deaf, deaf at risk, deafblind, oral deaf, hard of hearing or late-deafened. The DHHS Program Administrator also performs the following administrative duties related to this population:

- Identifies needs, coordinates program planning and recommends policy for the development of quality services.
- Develops and helps coordinate in-service training related to deafness and hearing loss across all staff levels in OVR and with service providers.
- Provides ongoing consultation and technical assistance to all programs of the agency and other providers related to programming and services.
- Reviews, evaluates and makes recommendations relating to grant projects and legislative proposals.
- Maintains open lines of communication between deaf communities, hard of hearing organizations, other groups of persons with hearing loss and OVR.
- Functions as liaison with specialists on deafness and hearing impairments in RSA Regional and Central Offices, in other government agencies, in Regional Resource Centers, and in Research and Training Centers as well as in other public agencies.
- Administers funds to Kentucky public postsecondary institutions for the provision of support services to students with hearing loss as per KRS 164.478 as amended.
- Administers Memorandums of Agreements with other state entities (EKU, KSD, etc.) related to programs for persons with hearing loss.

[Link: Funding for Support Services to PS Institutions](#)

Statewide Coordinator for Deaf Services

The OVR DHHS Program Administer presently also performs the duties of the State Coordinator of Deaf Services (SCD) within the DHHS Branch. The SCD has direct supervisory responsibility for the 8 Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCDs) with full time deaf caseloads. Field Administrators directly supervise the other RCDs with part time deaf caseloads. However, all of the RCDs are part of a statewide “team” and the SCD is leader of the RCD Team. The SCD sets annual performance goals for the RCD Team and individual RCD caseloads. Other SCD responsibilities include:

- Recruitment and hiring of qualified staff for Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD)
- Provision of direct assistance to RCDs and other staff in finding solutions to service delivery problems and expanding or developing needed services
- Arranging training and staff meetings for information exchange with RCDs, and other OVR staff serving individuals who are deaf

Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCD)

Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf serve individuals who are deaf, deaf at risk, deafblind (major, secondary, or other disability) and use sign language as their primary mode of communication. RCDs may also serve individuals who are oral deaf. Currently there are 10 RCDs statewide, 8 full time RCDs and 2 part time RCDs. Each county has an assigned RCD. Each RCD is responsible for a service area of several counties based on population areas of deaf persons. The RCDs consult with the SCD for questions about service delivery and assistance with appropriate services.

OVR recruits staff with sign language skills for RCD positions. The RCD must be fluent in American Sign Language to effectively communicate with consumers who prefer this communication mode. OVR utilizes the University of Tennessee Orientation to Deafness Programs (OTD & OTDP) for basic deafness rehabilitation and American Sign Language training and UT's Orientation to Deafness Plus program for training to serve persons who are deaf at risk and advanced ASL. The RCDs are also required to attend the Northern Illinois University (NIU) training on deaf-blindness. Other programs in deafness rehabilitation may be used as needed. Some of these programs provide stipends and are funded through the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

Also, each RCD has an internal OVR Career Development Plan. All full time RCDs are to attend the Southeast Regional Institute on Deafness (SERID) as part of their CDP. This conference focuses specifically on deafness rehabilitation and provides quality training on the latest developments in the field. SERID provides better quality training in a more cost effective manner for this specialized population.

[**Link: RCD Directory**](#)

[**Link: RCDs by Counties Served**](#)

[**Link: RCD Counties Served Map**](#)

KY Deaf Access Consortium (KDAC)

OVR is a partner in this consortium, which has established the use of desktop video conferencing to provide “tele-rehab” services to consumers who are deaf and use sign language. Most RCDs and Staff Interpreters have this technology in their home office and in their other remote offices in their service area.

Interpreting Services Coordinator

The Interpreting Services Coordinator supervises all of the Staff Interpreters in the DHHS branch. Other responsibilities include:

- Identifies, develops, and coordinates in-service training to improve/update our Staff Interpreters
- Supervises the delivery of interpreting services to the maximum extent possible in Staff Interpreter's service areas.
- Develops a plan of supervision and communicates with the KY Board of Interpreters for Temporary Licensed staff interpreters.
- Supervise/monitor ITP (Interpreter Training Program) students in practicum and internship situations.
- Review/monitor all interpreting services expenditures regularly.
- Update all Service Fee Memos related to interpreting.
- Performs professional interpreting/transliterating in a variety of settings using various communication modes for OVR staff and consumers.
- Actively serves on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Branch team.

Staff Interpreters

To ensure accessibility, the Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) provides interpreter services to consumers and staff persons who are deaf and or deaf blind. To provide quality interpreting services in a cost effective manner, OVR has employed 7 staff interpreters, which are located in areas with RCDs. OVR also has one (1) full time interpreter located at the Carl D. Perkins Comprehensive Rehabilitation Center (CDPCRC). The OVR Staff Interpreters are professional interpreters and serve as role models for other interpreters in the state. The role of the staff interpreter is to provide accurate communication between deaf and hearing persons while taking into consideration linguistic and cultural differences. The Staff Interpreter interacts with a wide variety of individuals and functions in diverse situations. Often, the information interpreted is highly confidential and may have sensitive topics with ethical implications. Specific duties of individual Staff Interpreters can vary from service area to service area.

[Link: VR Staff Interpreter Directory](#)

Statewide Coordinator for Deaf at Risk/DeafBlind Services (SCDB)

The Coordinator for Deaf at Risk Services also serves as the Coordinator for Services to individuals who are DeafBlind as well as functioning as one of the Regional Coordinators serving these populations.

Deaf at Risk responsibilities:

Specialized services to Individuals who are Deaf at Risk began as project to serve individuals who are most significantly disabled (MSD). This followed the publication of a document by the 25th Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI) which focused on Serving Individuals Who Are Low Functioning and Deaf (LFD). This population is characterized by specific criteria which include:

- Inadequate communication skills due to inadequate education and limited family support.
- Vocational deficiencies due to inadequate educational training experiences during the developmental years and changes in personal and work situations during adulthood.
- Deficiencies in behavioral, emotional, and social adjustment.
- Independent living skills deficiencies.
- Educational and transitional deficiencies.
- Health, mental and physical limitations.

As the term LFD is considered by many to not accurately portray this population and to focus on the negative aspects of individuals, DHHS has instead opted to use the term “Deaf at Risk”. The SCDB works closely with the SCD in providing consultation and technical assistance to RCDs serving individuals who are termed “deaf at risk”. Due to the specialized needs of this distinctive population, services must be developed on an individualized basis, as most existing services are not appropriate. The SCDB leads Deaf at Risk Services Team in on-going efforts to not only improve existing services to be more appropriate for these populations, but to develop services and programs as additional needs are identified. The challenges to meet the needs of this disability group are enormous and complex.

DeafBlind Responsibilities:

As an Affiliate for the Helen Keller National Center the primary responsibility of the SCDB is to provide training, technical assistance, consultation and coordination of services to Kentucky agencies and families on behalf of individuals who are deafblind, primarily those over age 21 years. The SCDB and other two Regional Coordinators, one of whom also serves as statewide coordinator for the Office for the Blind (OFB) comprise the DeafBlind Services Team which works to not only make existing services fit the needs of this population, but to develop services and programs as additional needs are identified.

Regional Services for Individuals who are Deaf at Risk

The Statewide Coordinator for Deaf at Risk Services also serves as one of the two Regional Coordinators who work closely with the RCDs in their designated areas of the state to provide technical assistance in the provision of services to specific individuals who are deaf at risk and with service providers as appropriate in transition planning for students considered deaf at risk. A person-centered planning process is used to address the multiple issues that may be involved in the transition process. In addition, this approach is often used in addressing the rehabilitation needs of adults who are deaf at risk. Either the Regional Coordinator or another trained facilitator facilitates this process. Each Regional Coordinator works with an interagency Regional Team in his/her area of the state that is set up to address issues and barriers identified through the

person-centered planning process and focus on the continual improvement of services to this population as well as services to individuals who are deafblind.

As part of the process to serve individuals who are deaf at risk, an intake form has been developed for counselors to use for help in identifying individuals who may fit this category. These intake forms are then shared with the Regional Coordinator for their area who reviews the information and determines whether or not a person centered planning team would be beneficial. If so, the Regional Coordinator will either lead the team him/herself or arrange for an independent facilitator to do so. Due to the complex communication needs of these individuals a Certified Interpreter for the Deaf (CDI) or Communication Coach (someone who is skilled in communicating with the individual) is utilized in order to accommodate the communication needs of the individual and insure he/she is involved in the process. The CDI or Communication Coach uses various techniques to match what is being said in the meeting with the communication mode of the individual by whatever means is required (simplifying the language, gestures, etc.).

[Link: Intake Process](#)

[Link: Intake Form](#)

[Link: Deaf @ Risk Services Monograph](#)

[Link: Deaf @ Risk Services Regions Map](#)

Deaf at Risk Services Team

The Deaf at Risk Services Team consists of the SCD and two Regional Deaf at Risk Services Coordinators (one of whom also functions as the Statewide Coordinator). This team is responsible for the development and implementation of the process for serving this population. As that involves the extensive use of person-centered planning, a pool of facilitators has been trained to lead teams for individuals who are deaf at risk and a service fee memorandum has been developed to provide for payment. The Team has developed goals which are reviewed at monthly Team meetings and updated and revised as needed in a process of continual improvement.

Regional Services to Individuals who are DeafBlind

The SCDB and other two Regional Coordinators, one of whom also serves as Statewide Coordinator for the Office for the Blind (OFB), have the responsibility for the following:

- Consultation and technical assistance to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Office for the Blind and other community adult service providers serving individuals who are deafblind
 - a. Provide local consultation at the request of programs/agencies.
 - b. Locate resources and materials for programs/agencies
 - c. Respond to customer and family requests for information and referral
 - d. Coordinate consultation and referral with the HKNC Regional Representative

- General training, technical assistance and coordination to agencies at all levels
 - a. Conduct project awareness activities
 - b. Conduct awareness training on the needs of individuals who are deafblind
 - c. Coordinate activities with the affiliates advisory committee and the Kentucky DeafBlind Steering Committee
 - d. Develop interagency agreements or procedures to facilitate the coordination of services to individuals who are deafblind
- Maintain a registry database for identifying and tracking individuals who are deafblind of all ages
 - a. Conduct customer and agency needs assessment activities to identify service gaps and issues

Each of the Regional Coordinators has an assigned area of state in which they work with counselors of both agencies to address the needs of specific individuals. Person Centered Planning is used extensively with this population, especially with students preparing to transition from school to adult services. During this process, the Regional Coordinators work closely with the Transition Coordinator for the KY DeafBlind Project, who takes the lead with students up to age 22 years old.

[Link: DeafBlind Services Regions Map](#)

DeafBlind Services Team

The DeafBlind Services Team is composed of the SCDB, two other Regional Coordinators and the Transition Coordinator for the KY DeafBlind and meets regularly to review team activities, problem solve, develop and update goals and plan for future services. The Team has developed a model program to serve individuals who are deafblind utilizing the resources of both OVR and OFB to serve an individual who qualifies for services from both agencies and expresses an interest in receiving services from both. The DeafBlind Team also works to maintain the KY DeafBlind Registry which includes individual of all ages who are deafblind and is passed on to HKNC for the national registry that they maintain.

[Link: DeafBlind Services Monograph](#)

[Link: Dual Case Counselors by County](#)

Expanding Horizons (State Advisory Committee for Services to Individuals who are Deaf at Risk or DeafBlind)

The DeafBlind and Deaf at Risk Services Teams take the lead role in the activities of the Expanding Horizons Committee, which is an interagency committee that serves in an advisory capacity to the Regional Coordinators providing services to individuals who are deaf at risk and deafblind as well as the Transition Coordinator for the KY DeafBlind Project. This committee meets quarterly and addresses issues at the state level that are barriers to the successful employment, mental health and independent living of individuals who are deaf at risk or deafblind.

Statewide Coordinator of Hard of Hearing/Late Deafened Services (SCHH/LD) –

The SCHH/LD does not directly supervise Communication Specialists. Supervision, performance goals, and case reviews are done at the local level by Field Administrators. As Communication Specialist positions become available, it is required that the State Coordinator for Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (SCHH/LD) be contacted to determine if a CS is still needed in that area based on the number of cases being served or see if there are any previously trained Communication Specialists that might be interested in transferring to this position.

Other SCHH/LD responsibilities include:

- Identifies needs and coordinates program planning and development of quality services
- Develops and coordinates in-service training and orientation on hard of hearing and late deafened across all staff levels in OVR and VR providers
- Provides ongoing consultation to all programs of the agency that has a bearing on services provided to individuals who are hard of hearing and late deafened
- Provides assistance to supervisors and counselors in finding solutions to service delivery problems
- Maintains open lines of communication between hard of hearing organizations and VR
- Provides technical assistance and support to Communication Specialists, field staff, and other agencies
- Meets with the Communication Specialist Team, composed of 1 manager and 5 Communication Specialists, to address issues and make recommendations
- Meets with Regional Communication Specialist Focus Groups
- Networks with counterparts in other states regarding policy, procedures and service delivery to individuals who are hard of hearing and late deafened

[Link: Hard of Hearing / Late Deafened Monograph](#)

Communication Specialist (CS)

Communication Specialists serve individuals who are hard of hearing or late deafened (major, secondary or other disability) and do not use sign language as their primary mode of communication.

Communication Specialists may also serve individuals who are deaf at risk, deafblind or oral deaf who do not use sign language. Communication Specialists are located in most of the major VR offices.

Currently there are 43 Communication Specialists statewide. Communication Specialists should consult with the Statewide Coordinator of Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened Services (SCHH/LD) for assistance with appropriate services.

CS responsibilities: gather medical information, assess communication problems in general and on the job, recognize which problems are hearing related (and which are not), know what technologies are available for the benefit of the consumer, do job site analysis and recommend modifications/accommodations, counsel consumer in needed communication/coping strategies and techniques, and refer consumers to appropriate community resources.

CS Skills & Training: receive extensive training from Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) staff and outside presenters on:

- Audiology
- Hearing aids
- Communication Assessments
- Assistive technology
- Psychosocial aspect of being or becoming hard of hearing
- Coping and communication strategies
- Functional assessments
- Job accommodations

Often the Communication Specialist is the only professional able to identify specific limitations of the consumer and coordinate technology and hearing aids used with other devices and strategies to be successful at work. Each Communication Specialist receives a membership to Self Help for Hard of Hearing People as a tool to use in counseling their consumers. Communication Specialists are encouraged to attend the annual Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (SHHH) convention as well as the annual Association for Late Deafened Adults (ALDA) convention to enhance skills and knowledge related to hearing loss issues and technology. Communication Specialists are required to attend the annual Communication Specialist training that is planned, developed, and coordinated by the SCHH/LD. Training requirements for Communication Specialists are to be included in their career development plan.

Often times consumers will come into the office to meet with the Communication Specialist to apply for services and struggle to hear and understand information given to them as well as general conversation. Each Communication Specialist has their own Assistive listening device to use in their office to not only help facilitate communication but to demonstrate this type of technology to those who may not be familiar with it. Some consumers may and be familiar with hearing aids and struggle with meetings and other group situations, but are not aware of technology that can enhance communication beyond the hearing aids.

Communication Specialist have inline amplifiers in their offices so consumers can see how some phones can be easily amplified. This also allows them to use the phone with greater ease to make calls for themselves to make transportation arrangements for pick up. When the consumer sees the Communication Specialist for hearing aid follow up, the phones can be used to try out the consumer's telecoil to make sure it is functioning properly.

[Link: Communication Specialist \(CS\) Directory](#)

[Link: Communication Specialist \(CS\) Directory By Counties Served](#)

[Link: Communication Specialist \(CS\) Map of Counties Served](#)

Services to Individuals who are Oral Deaf

These individuals may be served by the Communication Specialist (C.S.) or an RCD. It is recommended that these individuals be referred to the C.S. first to determine the appropriate VR Counselor to serve them.

For individuals who rely on oral communication, speech and lipreading, the potential for misunderstanding increases. Therefore, oral interpreters may help. Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act make clear the consumer's right to determine the communication mode. It is most appropriate that an early inquiry be made as to the consumer's preferred mode and level of communication.

Section Being Developed

The Rehabilitation Process – Status 00-26

- *Deaf – RCD*
- *Deaf at Risk – RCD*
- *DeafBlind – RCD*
- *Hard of Hearing*
- *Late Deafened*
- *Oral Deaf – RCD*